

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani Sahab (may his blessings remain on us for a long time),  
Vice President Darul Uloom Karachi

# Memories

## (Episode 4)

This was the short introduction to my eight siblings. I am the youngest of them, and as I have previously written I was born on 5<sup>th</sup> Shawwal 1362 AH. Hakeem Ul Ummah Hazrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) had passed away approximately three months before. Thus all my siblings had the honour of seeing him, or at least the blessed gazes of Hazrat had fallen on them. I missed out on both these good fortunes. Furthermore, the names of all our siblings were also chosen by Hazrat (may his secret be sanctified). Even though there is no question of my name being picked directly by Hazrat, but whenever Hazrat suggested some names at my respected father's (May Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) request he would recommend a list of several rhyming names for the name to be chosen from. Out of several other names one was "Muhammad Taqi" which had not been given to any of my brothers. It seems my respected father selected my name from this very list which Hazrat had provided. And since, after the demise of Hazrat Hakeem Ul Ummah, my respected father used to take advice from his beloved teacher and spiritual mentor Hazrat Miyan Sahab (i.e. Hazrat Maulana Sayyad Asghar Husain Sahab Deobandi (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him)), and he was a saintly man from whom Kashf (unveiling of normally hidden knowledge) and Karamaat (miracles) were witnessed, it thus seems probable that his advice would have been involved in picking my name.

All three of my elder brothers used to study in Darul Uloom Deoband. I had not even formally started Qai'dah Baghdadi at that time; hence there is no question of me studying in Darul Uloom Deoband. However I would sometimes accompany my three elder brothers to Darul Uloom, so a faint map of the Darul Uloom of that time had become engraved in my mind.

Childhood and being in mother's cradle are good times<sup>1</sup>

Behind our house (i.e. on the western side) was our paternal grandfather Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yaseen Sahab's (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) house in which our paternal grandmother (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon her) (who was Baiy'ah to Hazrat Gangohi (May his secret be sanctified)) used to live. Between our and her house was a tunnel-like way which we used to call *Neem Dari* (literally: half-door). After our paternal (grandfather's) house were various houses from our extended family, between which a narrow alley led to a relatively wide area which we used to call *Chowk* (piazza), and which was famous as the playground for us children. For us children it was nothing short of a big stadium in which all the children of the locality used to play those games which did not require any money to be spent nor required training from any coach. Our elder brother would also normally play local traditional games at this *Chowk* after Asar. As for me, the world of a 3 to 4 year old innocent child would start from his home and end at this Chowk, where more than playing I would entertain myself watching others play.

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<sup>1</sup> A Persian couplet

As I have mentioned before three nieces and a nephew of mine were older than me, from one to three years older, so there was no need to look for friends outside family. I had a friendly relationship with these same nephew and nieces, and the bond of childhood games was established with them. For our ages, Seek and Find etc. were the kind of games we could play those days, and for these the house was sufficient. There was no need to use the “*Chowk*” stadium for these kinds of games. Games like *Gilli Danda* (Tip-cat) were beyond our capabilities. Besides, I could never attain much expertise in any game.

Out of the nine of us I was the youngest, and perhaps due to this I was doted upon by all. I don’t know if it was due to this love and endearment or whether there was any reality to it, but everyone from my parents to siblings used to mention my intelligence from this small age. And I still remember the events which were used as evidence for this as if they happened today. Some of those events, which perhaps you will also find entertaining, are anxious to come on the pen:

May Allah Ta’ala shower his mercy and pleasure upon my respected father Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafee’ Sahab. Despite the fact that he was the top Mufti of an institute like Darul Uloom Deoband, and the level of knowledge and excellence which Allah Ta’ala had bestowed upon him was famous throughout the country, and his devoted students considered his service a great honour for themselves, despite all this he was naturally so humble and simple that he would go to the market by himself to buy household items, and sometimes when he would buy something for the house he would bring it home in his lap. In those days I had grown old enough to go to the bazaar holding my father’s fingers. When this happened he would let me buy something for myself while returning home. The era of chocolates and toffees had not yet arrived, so what were our favourite things? Roasted grams, popcorn, puffed rice, frozen cream (which was a local traditional form of ice cream) and local traditional sweets! When society advanced, one chocolate-looking sweet became available for one *paisa* (one-hundredth of a Rupee). This sweet looked like a slice of orange and we would call it orange sweet. Now I notice that in those days children’s desires revolved around those things which were healthy, and contained natural benefits, and were available everywhere at very cheap prices. The unhealthy and expensive things which have been invented today were unheard of.

Anyway! Whenever our respected father (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) would take us along somewhere he would buy us one of the above-mentioned things. As a result we would be recompensed for our effort of going and coming back, and the trip to the bazaar was a bonus. But he would buy us the things at his discretion. There was no tradition of children asking or demanding anything by themselves.

Thus one time our respected father (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) was bringing potatoes home. I was also with him, holding his fingers. That day, by chance, our respected father forgot to buy me something from the market. I kept thinking that I should get something, but when I did not get anything and our respected father was turning into the alley in which there was no shop where things of my liking were sold, I understood that today I was not getting anything. As I have mentioned above it was against my habit, and also tradition, to request something by myself and on the other hand I also wanted to remind our respected father (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) that you are forgetting something. The solution to these contradictory motives came as such to my childhood mind that I said to my respected father: “Father! If nothing else, put the potatoes in my lap”. My respected father spontaneously laughed at hearing me say this, and instead of potatoes he bought me something of my liking, and we reached home. He told this story to our entire household, and later this became a joke.

Similarly, in Deoband a bazaar used to take place on Wednesdays where people from neighbouring villages would sell their products, and where household-use items could be found at a low price. It was

called “Wednesday Bazaar”. Our respected father (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) once, while going to that bazaar, took me along. I don’t remember the things he bought from that bazaar, and also this bazaar mainly contained household-use items and did not contain anything interesting for children. Thus I did not get anything that day as well, until we were coming back. In the last shop there was a pile of *batashaa* (I kind of sweet) made of sugar. I could not repress myself when we were passing by this shop and said to my respected father: “Father! You could ask for the price of the *batashaa*.” And thus I reminded our respected father of his forgotten duty.

The neighbourhood in which our house in Deoband was located was called the neighbourhood of Big Brothers. Actually the children of our grandfather used to be called “big brothers”, and the neighbourhood had become known by this name. In the direction of the main door of our house (which was on the eastern side) was a small road which distinguished the community of Hindus from the community of Muslims. On that road, on opposite side of our house, only Hindu houses were situated. But we had good neighbourly relations with them. On the same road opposite our house was a flour mill which we used to call “Engine”. I remember that one time fire had struck that mill. Our respected father (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) was the first person to come to their aid, and remained busy for long in trying to extinguish the fire with water and earth extracted from the ground. Amicable neighbourly relations with non-Muslims was a distinguishing characteristic of all of our elders. This was an interesting sight for me, and after watching this scene from our house I would describe the events to my elder siblings in my lisping speech, and would gesture with my hands and feet to illustrate what happened. And while describing the situation, I would climb on them as I had seen the people helping to extinguish the fire climb on “Engine”.

I would speak with a lisping tongue till the age of around six years, and there are many jokes about this which became popular in our family. The elder son of Hazrat Maulana Anwar Shah Sahab Kashmiri, Hazrat Maulana Azhar Shah Qaiser (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon them both), who was the editor of Monthly Darul Uloom Deoband for a long time, was a friend of my elder brother respected Muhammad Zaki Kaifi (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him), and thus would often visit us at home. He used to love me a lot. My family used to affectionately call me “Taqqoo” instead of “Taqi” and Maulana Azhar Sahab also used to call me by this name. He would often take me in his lap and tease me by calling me “Taqqoo, Taqqoo”. On the other hand his name was Azhar which I would twist and pronounce in my lisping tongue as “Ajhal”<sup>1</sup>. So when he would knock at our door and I would come out and see him, I would go to Bhai Jaan and tell him: “Bhai Ajhal has come”. Maulana Azhar Sahab would amuse himself with my accent. Thus after coming to Pakistan when monthly Al-Balagh started under my supervision, and its first edition reached Maulana, he sent me a letter (which was his first letter to me after many years) in which he wrote:

“Today you are Maulana Taqi Usmani but to me you are still the same “Taqqoo Miyan” who used to call me “Ajhal”.

And at the end of the letter, in place of his name he wrote: “Your very same Brother Ajhal”.

Poetry and literature was very popular in our house. The compilation of my respected father’s (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) poems has already been published in his “Kashkol”. Our elder brother (Maulana Muhammad Zaki Kaifi (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him)) was a well-qualified poet, and due to him many poets used to visit our house. My two elder sisters were such that though they never

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<sup>1</sup> “Ajhal” in Arabic means “the most ignorant”

attended any school or madrasa, rather their education was confined to what was learnt at home, despite this their literary disposition was very pure, and sometimes they would compose their own poems. Due to this kind of atmosphere, in this initial stage of my childhood I had also memorized many poems which I would recite in my lisping tongue, and my family members would entertain themselves listening to these poems in my accented voice. This was a time when Hindu-Muslim conflicts had sparked in various parts of India. When one such conflict took place in Garh Macteesher, a poet of that area described this conflict in a heart-rending poem. I had memorized the following verses of that poem at that time:

What all happened, under the patronage of the current government,  
At the shore of the Ganges!  
Houses were burning; flames were flying in the air,  
At the shore of the Ganges!  
The ones whom parents used to kiss a hundred times,  
Who they used to love!  
The kuffar (non-Muslims) put spears on those cheeks!  
At the shore of the Ganges!

My sister, who is the youngest of all sisters and elder than all four of my brothers, whom we used to call Chhoti Aapa, and with the Grace of Allah Ta'ala she is still alive, she had once recited this poem to me in a rhythmic voice. I liked it so much that I would not go to sleep until I had heard it from her. Thus she used to use this poem as a lullaby on me. And later I addressed her in a poem I had composed about her, the first verse of which was:

Chhoti Aapa! You are the title of this poem of mine, you  
You are the adornment of this gathering, you

The last verse of this poem alludes to this lullaby:

You have taught me lessons even in lullabies  
Yes, you are my sister, my friend, you are my mother, you

Besides this when the movement for the creation of Pakistan started in the town the poets began composing emotionally inspiring poems. If I heard them from somewhere I would twist them, in I don't know what many ways, and repeat them in my lisping tongue. The following poem of Maulana 'Aamir Usmani (May Allah Tala's mercy be upon him) became very well-liked and popular:

Either don't fear sorrow and distress, or don't say "freedom!  
If you cannot bear the gallows then don't blame freedom

The following was another of his poems:

If you want freedom, come to Muslim League  
Overpower the world of disbelief by taking the flag of brotherhood

I would repeat such poems in my lisping voice, not understanding their meaning and jumbling their words, and my family members would be amused by this.

This was a time when the Independence Movement was at its peak throughout India, and demand for the establishment of Pakistan from the Muslims was intensifying. Thus processions used to pass from

the small road which is on the eastern side of our house. Since most of the processions used to have slogans for something being “Zindabad” (literally: long live) whenever I heard the sound of any procession from far I would tell my family members in my lisping voice “Jindabad aal coming” (Zindabad are coming). Having heard the various slogans many times I had memorized some of them. For example: “We will take the bullet on our chest, we will make Pakistan”. All family members would enjoy themselves when I would repeat those slogans in my lisping tongue.

### **The in-house school of Aunt Amatul Hannan**

In our locality, near the Chowk which I have mentioned before, was the house of an elderly lady of our family named Amatul Hannan. We used to call her aunt as she was a cousin sister of my respected father (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him). Her house was not just a house. It was a school in which not only children of our family, rather children from far away also used to come, and in which many generations had received education. Officially she used to teach how to read the Quran to girls and very small boys, but in reality she used to teach girls, through Bahishti Zewar, everything they would need to know even after marriage. And this was not restricted to just teaching the ideologies; rather she would make sure the students put it into practice. This was her pastime, and this was what she cherished, through which she had taught humanity to hundreds of boys and girls. We had all studied under her, from my eldest sister to myself.

I was not old enough to be a formal student of this school but my parents would informally send me with the Qa’idah Baghdadi, and thus I started Qa’idah Baghdadi in that home-based school where respected Amatul Hannan Sahiba (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon her) would assiduously fulfill her responsibilities of teaching and upbringing in her booming voice.

I remember all these things, and many more things besides these which would perhaps not be of interest or benefit to the readers. What was my age at the time? I cannot say with certainty but it was definitely less than four-and-a-half years because we had migrated from Deoband to Pakistan before I reached five. However I do remember the marriage of my eldest brother respected Muhammad Zaki Kaifi (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) which took place in 1946. I was certainly three years of age at that time. Thus whatever I remember is definitely from between the ages of three to four-and-a-half years. I am amazed that today I cannot remember some of the things that happened yesterday, but I remember these events of that small age as if I am seeing them now. It is noted from this that the things which are imprinted on the mind during one’s childhood are very long-lasting and permanent. It is therefore said that we should do good things in front of children, and we should not think: “What effect will these things, which are beyond their understanding, have on these blissfully ignorant children?”

Nevertheless, it is my deprivation and the regret remains in the heart that at that time Deoband was home to great (Islamic) scholars and the noble friends of Allah Ta’ala, but I was so young at that time that I don’t remember visiting any of them. But I do remember visiting Thana Bhawan with my parents one time, and this was my first travel by train as far as I can remember. But at that time I did not have any understanding as to what Thana Bhawan is, and what is the purpose of going there. However (after the demise of Hazrat Hakeem Ul Ummah (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him)) the most beloved teacher of my respected father and his spiritual guide Hazrat Maulana Sayyad Asghar Husain Sahab (May Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) (who was famous by the name of Hazrat Miyan Sahab) was alive at

that time. And most probably my respected father would have had my Tahneek<sup>1</sup> performed by him. But sadly I don't remember seeing him. However later I saw him in a dream, and when I described his physical characteristics to my elder siblings they confirmed that this was indeed how Hazrat looked like. Similarly, such great scholars as Shaykhul Islam Hazrat Maulana Sayyad Husain Ahmad Sahab Madani and Shaykhul Adab Hazrat Maulana I'izaaz Ali Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon them both) were present in Deoband but I could not attain the honour of meeting them due to my small age.

During this time on 27<sup>th</sup> Ramadan 1366H, equivalent to 14 August 1947, on the blessed night of the last Friday (of Ramadan) Pakistan was established. I was eight days short of being four years old. I don't remember that specific day but due to the repeated mention in our house of Pakistan being created I had imagined that a big building had been built which contained a big hall and a picture of the moon and a star is painted on its wall.

Hindu-Muslim riots erupted as soon as Pakistan was created, and an apocalypse of heart-rending tyrannies from the Sikhs on the Muslims began in eastern Punjab. Since Saharanpur, which is a district of U.P. of which Deoband is a town, was adjacent to eastern Punjab, thus there was a considerable population of Sikhs in this area. The circle of their cruelty had extended to our district as well, and they also continued to receive support from the Hindus. Their processions with chauvinistic slogans also used to pass by. Since there was a Hindu population spread out until far on the eastern side of our locality, which was called Hindu Wara, we used to hear rumours every night that tonight we would be attacked by the Sikhs or the Hindus. In view of this danger young men of the area used to take turns to keep guard at various check posts of the neighbourhood. Due to these circumstances my childhood mind had formed a fierce image of Sikhs, and the notion had become infused in that four-year-old mind that Sikhs are dangerous beings. One night I became upset at some action of my family members, and boycotting them, lay down at a corner of the eastern door of the house. From my perspective, this corner was dangerous for two reasons. Firstly, firewood used to be kept there from which scorpions were sometimes discovered. Secondly, that door of our house which opened to the road leading to Hindu Wara, from which Sikh processions used to proceed, was located at this corner. And the greatest threat of attack from them was from this side. But I, from my point of view, was taking on these two great dangers to show my family members that something they had done was so intolerable that it had motivated me to do such a serious and potentially fatal protest. Thus when my brothers and sisters would take turns to try to appease me and take me home, I would have only one answer which in my lisping tongue was: "Even if Sikhs come or a scorpion bites, I will not move from here"<sup>2</sup> Finally when none of my siblings succeeded in ending this serious protest of mine, my respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) had to step in. He came, took me in his lap, kissed me, and took me home in his arms. And apparently my demands were acceded to thereafter.

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<sup>1</sup> Tahneek is the practice of a pious person chewing something sweet (preferably a date) until it is suitable for a newborn to consume. It is thereafter placed in the mouth of the newborn mixed with a little of the saliva of the pious person.

<sup>2</sup> The sentence was said with a lisp in Urdu which cannot be captured in translation